

## **REQUIREMENTS**

- A. Do not pay TCA for an adult parent who has received 60 months of benefits under TANF, unless they meet requirements for the hardship exemption
- B. When counting the number of months of benefits received, do not count any month in which the individual:
1. Is a minor child, including the 18 or 19-year-old full-time student who is still a child on the grant, as long as the minor is not:
    - Head of household, or
    - Married to the head of household
  2. Receives counseling or is actively receiving services as part of the plan to overcome barriers to independence caused by domestic or family violence
    - Includes any month in which a child in the family receives counseling because of family violence
  3. Is living on an Indian reservation or Alaskan native village with 50% unemployment
  4. Has a disability lasting 12 months or more and is in the state-funded Disability Entitlement Advocacy Program (DEAP/TCA)
    - Includes families in DEAP/TCA because a child in the family has a disability lasting 12 months or more
  5. Is a non-parent caretaker relative in the assistance unit and has no natural or adopted children of his or her own in the unit
  6. Has countable earned income on or after July 1, 1999

**Note:** The month is countable if the needs of an adult parent are removed because of a sanction. Months are not countable when the case is closed due to a sanction

- C. When the adult parent in the assistance unit has received benefits for 60 countable months, the case manager must determine if the customer meets the requirements for the hardship exemption. Grant the family a hardship exemption when:
1. There is an Independence Plan formulated by the customer and the case manager which states that:
    - The activities and other actions that customer is expected to complete; and

- Supportive services the local department is expected to provide to the family
2. Documentation in the case record shows that the customer has:
- Been offered or provided supportive services by the local department as stated in the state plan
  - Demonstrated a good faith effort to participate in work activities that may include finding and keeping a job; and
  - Experienced significant barriers beyond the customer's control that may include finding and keeping a job
- OR--
3. The local department did not offer or provide the supportive services stated in the Independence Plan
- D. The following procedures shall be followed by the local department if the family is granted a hardship:
1. The case record (paper and electronic) shall include documentation that the :
- Local department has maintained an Independence Plan that is currently in effect. Maintenance includes updating the supportive services to be provided and the customer activities as required according to the customer's changing needs
  - Customer has made a good faith effort to meet the activities and other expectations in the Independence Plan
  - Local department's efforts to ensure that the terms and conditions stated in the Independence Plan have been fulfilled by the customer and the local department
2. Case record documentation includes, but is not limited to:
- A current Independence Plan that is updated as the needs to the family change; and
  - Referrals and outcomes of the following:
    - Assessment
    - Disabilities;
    - Counseling;
    - Social Services;

- Other supportive services;
  - Testing;
  - Education programs;
  - Job search;
  - Job training;
  - Work experience; and
  - Employment
3. Based on the review of the family's case record, the case manager makes recommendation in writing as to:
- Whether a hardship exemption should be granted; and
  - The reasons why a hardship exemption should be granted; or
  - the reasons why a hardship exemption should not be granted
4. The recommendation includes a determination of whether the local department made the supportive services available to the customer as specified in the Independence Plan
5. The customer is give a hardship exemption if:
- If the local department did not make the agreed upon supportive services in the Independence Plan available to the customer; or
  - The supportive services provided did not remove the barrier; and
  - The customer demonstrated good faith efforts to keep the terms of the Independence Plan
6. When the hardship exemption is granted, a new assessment must be completed within 45 days from the date the exemption is granted, that considers the:
- Reasons for continued reliance on TCA;
  - Educational level, job skills and readiness, and interests, to evaluate the customer for appropriate work activities;
  - Available personal and family resources to help the family become independent;
  - History of family violence; and

- History of substance abuse
7. When the hardship exemption is given a new Independence Plan between the customer and the local department is required within 60 days from the date the exemption is granted.
  8. The case manager and the customer develop, sign and date the new mutually agreed upon Independence Plan that states what must be done, when and by whom to:
    - Overcome the customer's barriers to employment;
    - Help the customer prepare for the transition to work; and
    - Ensure the family becomes independent
  9. The new Independence Plan includes, but is not limited to, the following:
    - A statement of the goals and intent of the Plan;
    - Barriers or problems identified that must be overcome to achieve the goals of the Independence Plan;
    - The services and supports the local department provides to help the family overcome the identified barriers;
    - The time frames each service and support is to be provided by the local department;
    - Each responsibility and activity the customer is to accomplish; and
    - The time frames in which the customer is to accomplish each task
  10. The case manager's recommendation (to grant or not grant a hardship exemption) and new Independence Plan must be reviewed and approved by:
    - A FIP supervisor; and
    - The director of the local department or designee

**NOTE:** The director or designee will make sure that the family that does not receive a hardship exemption is referred to services, if appropriate.

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11. Customers who do not complete the agreed upon activities included in their Independence Plan, when the local department has made available the agreed upon supportive services, are subject to the appropriate sanctions for not meeting individual program requirements

## VERIFICATION

- A. Document why an adult parent is exempt from the time limit
- B. Document extensions beyond 60 months. Specific verifications are according to local option
- C. Get proof of benefits from other states where the family received cash assistance
  1. **Verification is required before the case is finalized** – supervisor adjusts time limit counter before case is finalized
  2. Only use the number of countable months since the other state began TANF
  3. Every state must exclude months in which the customer was a minor in the grant and not the head of household or married to the head of household and any month the customer was living on a reservation with 50% unemployment.
  4. States may elect to exempt other individuals from the time limits, such as were victims of family violence
  5. Do not count months in which only state funds were used to pay benefits

## SANCTIONS AND CLOSINGS

- A. Sanctions
  1. Customers who have been sanctioned 3 or more times for noncompliance with work requirements since January 1, 1997 should not be reaching their 60-month time limit in January 1, 2002. The compliance requirement is 30 days for 3 or more sanctions.
  2. **The customer is not issued benefits for the 30<sup>th</sup> day required period of compliance and that month is not counted toward the 60-month time limit.**
  3. Case managers use the appropriate CARES code for the number of sanctions imposed for not meeting work requirements:
    - **Code 501** – 1<sup>st</sup>, **must be cured** by at least one day of compliance;
    - **Code 502** – 2<sup>nd</sup>, **must be cured** with at least 10 calendar days of compliance;
    - **Code 503** – 3<sup>rd</sup>, **must be cured** with 30 calendar days of compliance.

1. Give families a hardship exemption when they reach the 60-month time limit if they are currently meeting the terms of their Plan even though one or two-work sanctions have been imposed.
2. Give families a hardship exemption when they reach the 60-month time limit if they are currently meeting the terms of their Plan even though:
  - Three or more work sanctions have been imposed and
  - There is no pattern of non-cooperation over the most recent 12 month

**B. Closings**

1. Families **are not given** a hardship exemption when they reach the 60-month time limit and:
  - Have had three or more sanctions imposed **and**
  - There is a pattern of non-cooperation in the most recent 12 months that includes the month the customer reaches the 60-month limit.
2. Customers who have received a total 60 months of cash assistance benefits are not given a hardship exemption if:
  - They have received an initial and updated assessments; and
  - They have not completed the agreed –upon supportive services available to the family.
3. Case managers use the following CARES worker entered closing codes:
  - Code 510  
You have gotten the maximum number of TCA payments and cannot get more because you did not do the things you agreed to in your Family Independence Plans.
  - Code 511  
You have gotten the maximum number cash payments in Maryland and in another state and cannot get more because you did not do the things you agreed to in your Family Independence Plans.
  - Case managers **must add plain English, case specific free-form text** to the appropriate CARES notice so that the customer is able to **read and understand** the reason for the sanction or closing.

**CASE MANAGEMENT TIPS**

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- A. CARES will automatically start and stop the time limit counter based on information the case manager enters in the system
- B. If the individual has received benefits under TANF in other states
  - 1. Always call the other state to verify benefits under TANF
  - 2. The unit supervisor must manually correct the counter prior to finalization
- C. It is important to code CARES correctly for mandatory federal reporting
- D. Local departments will be sent monthly reports that list customers and the number of months they received TCA benefits since January 1, 1997

## EXAMPLES

- Example 1. Mrs. Calvert received TCA off and on for 60 countable months. Mrs. Calvert has worked in the past, but is now unable to find a job. The major employer in the area has gone out of business and other jobs that she could qualify for are very hard to find. Mrs. Calvert has currently been receiving TCA for 60 months and is in a training program to improve her marketable skills as specified by the requirements of her Independence Plan. Employment problems in her area are confirmed.
- The case manager must review Mrs. Calvert's circumstances to see if she qualifies for a hardship exemption
  - The case manager documents that the requirements of the Independence Plan were met by the local department and that Mrs. Calvert demonstrated a good faith effort to meet the activities specified in the Independence Plan
  - The case manager makes a recommendation in writing that Mrs. Calvert receive a hardship exemption
  - The case manager does a new assessment of Mrs. Calvert's skills, educational level, job readiness and areas of interest.
  - The case manager and Mrs. Calvert develop a new Independence Plan that states how the customer will overcome her barrier to employment and how the local department will support her efforts
  - The new Independence Plan is approved by the supervisor and the local department director
  - The exemption needs to be reviewed on a regular schedule
- Example 2. Ms. Warren has received assistance for 60 countable months. While she was receiving benefits the local case manager completed and updated

Ms. Warren's Independence plan and assessment. The local department has documentation that during the time she was receiving benefits, Ms. Warren was sanctioned twice in 1998 and once in 1999. The local department has made many types of services available to her. Ms. Warren recently quit her job without good cause. She is applying for herself and her two minor daughters.

- Mrs. Warren is not eligible for assistance.

Example 3. Nancy Newton originally applied for assistance in January 1997 when she was 17 and pregnant. She had been living away from her parents for over a year when she came to apply. She received a full grant for 24 months and then began working part-time. The job began in February 1999 with countable earnings beginning in March and ending in April 2000. Nancy returned to school to study computers while receiving a grant through August 2002. She is currently looking for a job

- Nancy has now received assistance for a total of 68 months, January 1997 to August 2002.
- The months from July 1999 to April 2000 (10 months) are excluded because she had earned income.
- There are no excluded months while she was a minor because she was head of household
- Nancy Newton currently is eligible for 2 more countable months of benefits for herself.

Example 4. In 1997, Fanny Florida received TANF in Arkansas on her mother's grant for three years and then, when she turned 18, received TANF for herself and her son for 15 months while she went to school. She married upon graduating and moved to Texas where she had two more children. The family received TANF for 24 months. Ms. Florida then moved to Colorado with her children and received TANF there for 10 months and then came to Maryland. After receiving TCA for 6 months and missing court dates for child support and work program appointments, Ms. Florida states that she is afraid to go out because her husband has been very abusive and she thinks he may have followed her to Maryland. The family violence expert immediately begins a plan with the family.

- Ms. Florida has 55 countable months
  - a. 15 months in Arkansas after turning 18 and receiving her own grant
  - b. 24 months in Texas
  - c. 10 months in Colorado



d. 6 months in Maryland

- The counter has stopped because Ms. Florida is now actively working on a plan to overcome the effects of family violence. Although she and the children were victims during much of the time she was on assistance, she did not seek help, so those months cannot be excluded

Example 5. Mrs. Washington was receiving assistance under the DEAP/TCA program because her 3-year-old son is profoundly disabled and they are applying for SSI for him. She also receives assistance for her 6-year-old daughter and herself. Mrs. Washington's son is approved for SSI and is removed from the TCA grant. The case is no longer in a state-funded category.

- Mrs. Washington is now subject to the 60-month limit since the case is no longer DEAP/TCA
- Mrs. Washington might be granted an exemption when she has received assistance for 60 months if she is not able to get a job because of her son's condition

Example 6. Mr. and Mrs. Bradley and their children have received TCA for 60 months. Mrs. Bradley was sanctioned twice in 1998 for non-cooperation of work requirements. Since 1998, they have participated in the activities outlined in their Family Independence Plan and the local department has and is providing services to help the family. The Bradley family is given a hardship exemption.

Ms. Milton and her two children have received TCA for 60 months. Ms. Milton was sanctioned once in 1997, once in 1998 and once in 1999 for not cooperating with work requirements. Since her last sanction, the customer has participated in the activities she and her case manager agreed to in her Family Independence Plans. The local department has made several types of services available to her. The Miltons are given a hardship exemption.

Example 7. Mr. Holden has received TCA for himself and his two children for 60 months. He was sanctioned once in 1999, twice in 2000, once in 2001 and a fourth sanction is being imposed effective March 2002 for non-cooperation with work requirement. **Because he was sanctioned two times for 30 days, Mr. Holden does not reach the 60-month time limit until March 2002.**

Several support services (individual and family counseling, anger management classes and budgeting assistance) have been provided for the family, however, Mr. Holden has missed appointments with good reason and refused to attend some service programs. He has been reassigned to training programs because he was uncooperative and

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disruptive during the sessions. Mr. Holden has shown a pattern of non-cooperation. The Holden family is not given a hardship exemption.

#### **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- Family Investment Program Components – State Funded TCA
- Application – Family Violence Screening
- Technical Eligibility – Age